



Boaz Berney
Historical flutes

Flute d'amour

It is difficult to say when the first flutes d'amour were made, but the earliest music written specifically for the instrument can be dated back to the 1730's. There are a few such pieces, about twenty-five in total, mostly by the Darmstadt Kapelmeister Christof Graupner (1683-1760). From the existing repertoire it is apparent that the term *flute d'amour* could have referred to any one of three types of traverso:

- An instrument in C, or a *Corps de rechange* for C (also called a *corps d'amour*). The only surviving piece composed for an instrument in that key is a concerto by J.A. Hasse in the Royal Music Library of Stockholm. There are only a few of this type of flute surviving: a three-part instrument by Naust in Paris, and four part of the *corps d'amour* type instruments by Scherer and Denner.
- An instrument in B: All of the Graupner pieces are written for such an instrument. There are about ten instrumental pieces (concertos and overtures) and ten cantatas, all of them written in 1730 - 1740 . Surviving instruments were made by T. Lot, J. Schlegel, J.W. Oberlander and, of course, Jan van Heerde.
- An instrument in Bb called a 'tenor flute' in England: Once again, there is only one piece surviving that calls for such a flute d'amour, and that is a concerto by Molter. There are a few examples of such flutes made in England, by Stanesby Jr. and Schuchart.

When looking for repertoire that will suit the flute d'amour one should recall Quantz' advice:

"...if anyone wishes to practice upon one of these uncommon flutes [flute d'amour and Quart-flute], he has only to imagine a different clef for the notes; he can manage everything else as on the regular transverse flute" (Quantz *Versuch*, I,17,p. 43)

For a flute d'amour in B one has to imagine that the music is written in either French violin clef or in bass clef one octave higher, thus transposing the music a minor third higher and ending up sounding in written pitch. Recommended keys for such transpositions would be E/e, A/a, D, f# and b (fingered as G/g, C/c, F, a and d):

Piece in A maj. play as in french clef C maj.

Another possibility would be to play the music as written (i.e. not transposing a minor third higher) and have the continuo group transpose a third lower, although this possibility does not greatly expand the range of possible keys by much, as the continuo players are also limited in their choice of keys. For example, if the flute player will play in (fingered) D major - a perfectly natural key for the normal traverso, the continuo will have to play it in B major, which is possible, but very 'wolfy' in most Baroque temperaments.

Further reading:

- On the van Heerde family as well as other Dutch woodwind makers see R. van Acht: "Dutch Wind-Instrument Makers from 1670 to 1820" GSJ 1988, p. 83-100
- The most extensive article about Alto flutes and Flute d'amour is by P. Thalheimer: "Flauto d'amore, B flat Tenor flute und "tiefe Quartflöte"" Tibia ? 334-342.